

April, 1996

## FACT SHEET - High Seas Fishing Compliance Act of 1995

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces a permitting system applicable to U.S. vessels that fish on the high seas. "High seas" means the waters beyond the territorial sea or exclusive economic zone (or the equivalent) of any nation, to the extent that such territorial sea or zone is recognized by the United States. Permits issued to high seas fishing vessels will require that the vessels fish on the high seas in accordance with international conservation and management measures recognized by the United States. U.S. vessels holding other NMFS permits must nonetheless obtain this new permit.

High seas fishing permits will be issued by NMFS regional offices. While applicants may apply to any NMFS regional office, it is recommended that applicants apply to the NMFS regional office with which they normally interact on Federal fisheries matters. The application fee for a permit is \$50. A permit will be valid for five years from the date of issuance.

Application fees will be used to recover administrative costs incurred in issuing the permits. Application forms are available from NMFS regional offices. Addresses for NMFS regional offices are as follows:

Northeast Region, NMFS, (Attn: HSFCA Permits), One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298. Phone: (508) 281-9244. Fax: (508) 281-9135

Southeast Region, NMFS, (Attn: HSFCA Permits), 9721 Executive Center Drive, N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702. Phone: (813) 570-5326. Fax: (813) 570-5583

Southwest Region, NMFS, (Attn: HSFCA Permits), 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213. Phone: (310) 980-4000. Fax: (310) 980-4047

Northwest Region, NMFS, (Attn: HSFCA Permits), 7600 Sand Point Way, N.E., BIN C15700, Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115. Phone: (206) 526-6140. Fax: (206) 526-6736

Alaska Region, NMFS Restricted Access Program, (Attn: HSFCA Permits), 709 West Ninth Street, Suite 713, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668. Phone: (907) 586-7344. Fax: (907) 586-7354

Permits are to be issued under the authority of the High Seas Fishing Compliance Act of 1995 (Act). The Act implements obligations of the United States under the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas (Agreement). The

Agreement was negotiated in response to fisheries crises that have arisen in many areas of the world as a result of increasing fishing efforts on the high seas.

The primary tenet of the Agreement is the obligation of Parties to the Agreement to require that fishing vessels carrying their flags obtain specific authorization to operate on the high seas. Parties are also responsible for ensuring that their vessels do not undermine conservation and management measures that have been adopted by global or regional fishery management organizations.

The Agreement is also designed to discourage vessel owners from reflagging their vessels for the purposes of evading international conservation and management measures to which they would otherwise be bound. For example, the effectiveness of the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) has been undermined by vessels reflagged in nations that are not ICCAT members. Flying "flags of convenience," these vessels then fish for tuna in the North Atlantic in defiance of ICCAT rules. However, Parties to the Agreement are bound to disallow the licensing of a vessel of another country if it can be determined through an exchange of information that the vessel has been sanctioned by that nation within the last three years for violating international conservation and management measures. Thus, vessel owners intent on conducting fishing operations irrespective of environmental considerations and measures designed to protect the environment will be thwarted.